



## News Release

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### **Utah's Uninsured Rate Holds Steady in 2008**

*298,200 Utahns lack health insurance*

SALT LAKE CITY – The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) today kicked-off Cover the Uninsured Week by releasing new estimates that show little change in the percentage of Utahns who were uninsured during 2008. The Utah Healthcare Access Survey (UHAS) shows the percentage of Utahns who were uninsured in 2008 was 10.7 percent, compared to 10.6 percent in 2007. This follows a decline from 11.9 percent in 2006.

The survey estimates 298,200 Utahns lacked health care coverage during calendar year 2008, a modest increase of 11,000 from the previous year (287,200 in 2007) but still less than the 306,000 observed in 2006. The number of uninsured children age 18 and younger decreased by 13.6 percent, but the number of uninsured adults age 19 to 64 increased by 12.3 percent.

The new data suggests keeping the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) open for enrollment continuously throughout 2008 has increased the number of insured children. Legislation passed in 2008 enabled the UDOH to keep enrollment open year-round, a status not experienced since 2001 due to funding restraints. When enrollment opened in July 2007, CHIP covered approximately 25,000 children; at the conclusion of 2008 enrollment had increased to more than 37,000 children.

“Over the past year, we have focused on reaching out to families to make sure their children have access to the coverage they need,” said UDOH Executive Director Dr. David Sundwall. “I’m so happy to report that our efforts are paying off. We now need to continue to work to ensure all people in Utah, including adults, have access to affordable insurance, especially with the current state of the economy.”

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The UDOH announced last week it was opening enrollment for the Primary Care Network (PCN), a preventive health coverage plan for uninsured adults. Enrollment is open through April 30; more information is available on-line at [www.health.utah.gov/pcn](http://www.health.utah.gov/pcn) or by calling 1-888-222-2542.

In 2008, and again just two weeks ago, Gov. Jon Huntsman signed several bills to address the problem, including HB 188 and HB 165, measures proposed from the legislative task force to create real changes in the healthcare system.

Since 2001, Utah's uninsured population has grown at an average annual rate of 5.9 percent—more than double the rate of the state's overall population growth of 2.8 percent for the same time period. Of the 298,200 uninsured Utahns, more than 72,000 are residents whose income falls below the federal poverty level (FPL), more than 100,000 are employed full-time and more than 41,000 are self-employed.

The survey also found:

- 35 percent of adults aged 19-64 and living below 150 percent of FPL were uninsured
- 37 percent of Hispanics/Latinos were uninsured
- 42 percent of adults without a high school diploma were uninsured
- 16 percent of self-employed Utahns were uninsured
- 17 percent of Utahns between the ages of 18 and 34 were uninsured
- 78 percent of Utahns who were insured in 2008 had coverage through a current or former employer or union, down slightly from 79.5 percent in 2007.

The UHAS is an annual, statewide random-digit-dial telephone survey that measures health insurance status and health care access. It is representative of the Utah population living in households with land line telephones.

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*The mission of the Utah Department of Health is to protect the public's health by preventing avoidable illness, injury, disability and premature death, assuring access to affordable, quality health care, and promoting healthy lifestyles.*